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Report on Charles R. Crane, April 8, 1910

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When the President selected Mr. Crane for the important post of Minister to China he did so on the recommendation of a number of people who gave him to understand that Mr. Crane was accustomed to large business operations and experience, which seemed to indicate him as especially qualified for the Chinese Mission at the present time when business and diplomacy are so thoroughly interrelated in China. The selection on these grounds was most welcome to the Secretary of State.

I was with the Secretary of State when Mr. Crane first presented himself at the Department. The oddity of his appearance and address struck one, but one had heard so well of him that one at once inferred that, associated with this personality, there must be a peculiarly clever mind.

The Secretary and I had talks with Mr. Crane, and he had every opportunity to know, from the printed regulations, that every diplomatic officer was entitled to thirty days period for instruction. He knew that we had a Division of Far Eastern Affairs, one of whose main duties was to give infinite time to officers proceeding to the Far East. Mr. Crane seemed always in a hurry, and I think only spent a week or ten days all told in Washington.

Washington, this being divided into five or six separate flying visits. I had a long talk with him and lent my best books on diplomacy and placed myself entirely at his disposition.

Mr. O'Brien the Ambassador to Japan, and Mr. Rockhill, former Minister to China and newly appointed Ambassador at St. Petersburg, it appeared, were in town. It was an ideal opportunity,- that no other Minister to China ever had to get in thorough touch with the Far East from the Chinese, Japanese and Russian point of view, - to give Mr. Crane the benefit of this. Mr. Rockhill was actually detained in Washington beyond the day arranged for his departure. The Secretary of State gave a luncheon for Mr. Crane in a private room at the Club,- something he has done for no other American diplomat,- and invited officials of the Department and Messrs. Rockhill and O'Brien, to have an easy opportunity for full conference. Mr. Crane was also in conference with his two colleagues one whole forenoon in the Far Eastern Division. Mr. O'Brien happened to be visiting at my house. I asked Mr. Crane to dine with us in order to
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have the benefit of talking with Mr. O'Brien, who had been some years in Japan and was very familiar with the Far East.

Mr. Crane was leaving town that night, but at a great inconvenience,- the house being done up for the summer,- I persuaded him to spend the night in order that we might talk, as we did, until about one a. m. Of course, I did all this especially to give Mr. Crane extraordinary opportunities for the fullest instructions.

About Mr. Crane taking Marvin to China, I explained to him the delicacy involved in his do so by the fact that Marvin had been ⁱⁿ Chinese employ to conduct a press campaign against the Japanese, but added that the Secretary would rely entirely upon his discretion. I also faintly intimated the desirability of extreme discretion in speeches.

Some of Mr. Crane's speeches naturally made the whole Department's hair stand on end, especially one he made in New York where he used the expression "hold up China". He telephoned to the Secretary at his farm and the Secretary, who had only read an abbreviated account of the speech, in order to be agreeable to Mr.

Crane

Crane complimented him upon it. When we showed the Secretary the full account he naturally thought the speech indiscreet.

At a time when the Department was considering a most delicate question with Japan Mr. Crane received from a clerk in the Far Eastern Division what he would have received, I should think, from its chief, information that we were considering a certain course. Of course, the fact that we were doing this was not being divulged because it would obviously disturb the negotiation, as any child would know. The officers of the Department were amazed three days later to see what was before the Department clearly indicated in a Chicago newspaper. Painsstaking investigation proved the fact that Mr. Crane, without permission and keeping secret his action, deliberately gave the story to a certain correspondent with a three days release, and had so left Washington. This outrageous act was the direct cause of the acceptance of his resignation. When I returned from the hospital and was convalescing from appendicitis, the Secretary came to see me at my house two or three times, spending each time one or two hours asking my view on what was his duty. He similarly consulted all the other higher officials of the Department and all exactly advocated the Secretary's course

course.

When Mr. Crane was summoned from San Francisco to Washington, instead of giving an answer regardful of the public interest, denied knowledge of the cause, which was alright, but instead of being non-committal gave explanations plainly calculated to increase the tension with Japan by falsely stating his recall was due to the seriousness of that situation.

At the house of the Secretary of State in the presence of a high official of the Department the Secretary very gently put before Mr. Crane his indiscretion. Mr. Crane admitted that he had made a mistake and said to the Secretary, in the most earnest way, that if the confidence which he, the Secretary, felt in him (Crane) had suffered in the least, he requested the Secretary merely to say so in order that he might resign. The Secretary took the matter under consideration and then proceeded to beg all of us in the Department to try to devise a way to save Mr. Crane without neglecting our duty to the country. The Secretary was confronted with these alternatives: to do the easy thing and let Mr. Crane proceed to

to China and perpetrate indiscretions which would damage the national interests, or to take him at his word and allow him to resign, thus running the risk of bringing upon himself (the Secretary) a great deal of bitter resentment. Mr. Crane might have resigned assigning any cause. The Department stood ready to go to any honorable length to save him and his reputation. After placing the Secretary in this difficult position he rushed to the White House and wrote telegrams to the President contradicting what he said to the Secretary, claiming that he made no mistake, and alleging the Secretary was the one who had made a mistake. Naturally these telegrams were at once put before the Secretary of State.

In the course of his statements to the press Mr. Crane, who had received my hospitality and had written a letter to my wife warmly appreciative of my many kindnesses to him, made the statement that I had broken four appointments to see him. What happened was this. I had an appointment with him one Thursday, I think. Late the night before I was summoned to Valley Forge on business, ostensibly to return the afternoon, when I had
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in mind to see Mr. Crane in place of the morning appointment. The Secretary kept me all day and the night. When I reached the Department at 11:30 Friday I was swamped with business, but gave forty or fifty minutes to Mr. Crane. I was then in pain, and had to go home to give a luncheon to the Japanese Prince, Kuni, after which I went to bed with a high fever and appendicitis. In the morning I had told Mr. Crane that I was going that afternoon to New York for the Hudson-Fulton Celebration and to be at the Holland House, and that there we could have plenty of talks. I told him what train I would take, and he said he would change to the same train. This is as near as I ever came to breaking four engagements with Mr. Crane.

Throughout Mr. Crane's experience he showed a curious egoism and inaptitude, and lack of the sense of values, also of the sense of loyalty. In every country it is the recognized duty of the diplomat to take the blame and shield the Government and his chief, the President. It seems never to have occurred to Mr. Crane. He also committed the unspeakable indiscretion and vulgarity of using in public speeches the careless homely phrase that the

President

President had used with him in private conversation. I refer to his saying that he had been told to give it to them "red hot". The best test of this fault is that he did not seem to realize that he was going as the spokesman of the Department of State. He thought he was going as a constructor of policy, in which work the President would be allowed a certain participation-, the mere details of selling goods, etc., being left to the diplomatic department of the government, and with all this hopelessness of point of view, to my amazement, Mr. Crane showed so sublime an egoism that when invited to discuss Far Eastern Affairs he would instead talk by the hour of his travels in the Near East and assure us that he knew more of Russia than any other living man outside of that empire.

April 8, 1910.